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19 November 1968

NSA & ONI Declassification/Release Instructions on File.

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Strategic Employment of Soviet Cruise
Missile Submarines

1. The Soviet cruise missile submarine fleet is believed to have the primary mission of countering naval forces, particularly aircraft carrier task forces. The bulk of the Soviet cruise missile submarine capability is provided by the 33 nuclear-powered E-class submarines. These have the range to be used in strategic strikes against US coastal targets but so far we have seen none deployed for this purpose. The size of the Y-class ballistic missile submarine program argues against such use of the E-class fleet in the future.

25X1C 2. In the mid-1950's the Soviets began to build both ballistic and cruise missile firing submarines. We know [REDACTED] that, in 1959, the Soviet Navy was denied the mission of strategic attack. This resulted in the premature cancellation of the ballistic missile submarine construction program at the same time that production of cruise missile submarines was expanded. In 1963, when the Navy regained the strategic strike mission, the E-class program was phased out and the Y-class ballistic missile submarine program was initiated. The timing of these construction programs and the changes in mission are among the factors that indicate the Soviets do not intend to use the E-class in the primary mission of strategic strike.

3. All deployments of E-class submarines detected over the past several years have been to locations generally astride ship transit routes. No deployments have been detected in locations which

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would threaten US coastal targets. During the July 1967 strategic exercise, four E-class were deployed some 1,500 nautical miles off the US east coast. The estimated locations of these submarines equate reasonably well with the range of the SS-N-6 missile used on the Y-class submarine and suggest that the Soviets were using E's to simulate Y-class submarines.

4. Since the Arab-Israeli war in June of 1967, the Soviets have maintained an E-class patrol in the Mediterranean, presumably targeted against Sixth Fleet carriers. Participation of E-class submarines in fleet exercises in the Norwegian Sea in 1967 and 1968 have reflected a clear relationship with N-class attack submarines and Bear D reconnaissance aircraft. In these exercises, the combined force of submarines and aircraft operated in opposition to large naval surface units, which are believed to have simulated carrier task forces.

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